



## Airplanes take off for safe haven

**DRY WEATHER:** After the rains, pilots leave Corona Municipal Airport for other air facilities.

10:23 PM PST on Saturday, January 22, 2005

By JERRY SOIFER / The Press-Enterprise

CORONA - Propellers whirled. Engines churned. Pilots chomped at the bit to fly again.

Closed since Jan. 11 after being deluged by heavy rain and flooding from the Prado Basin, the Corona Municipal Airport came back to life Saturday as airplanes were allowed to take off - but not land - during a three-hour window of hazy blue skies. Eight planes lined up for takeoff before the 1 p.m. start time. Thirty had left by 3:15 p.m.

Pilots were being allowed to take their planes to safe haven at neighboring airports in Rubidoux, Chino and Riverside. Pat Krugh of Burbank flew his single-engine plane to San Luis Obispo to complete a sale delayed two weeks by the rains. His girlfriend, Diana Bigelow of Riverside, waved goodbye.

"He got antsy when he couldn't fly," Bigelow said. "It's like therapy for him."

The airport runway will be open for a similar time period today, Corona Airport Director Rich Brodeur said.

The hope is that with fewer planes, the airport will have room for all the remaining craft even if rains cause more flooding, Brodeur said.

Brodeur said neighboring airports called him after the rains began, offering space for beleaguered Corona aviation enthusiasts.

Mike Lee drove from his home in Eugene, Ore., to the Cessna 150 he hangs during the winter in Corona. He said he will fly the plane to Riverside today and then drive back to Eugene.

"When I saw the picture of the flooding - I think it was on CNN - I was worried. I came right down," said Lee, who found his plane undamaged by the rain. He keeps his plane in Corona during the winter because of the difficulty of flying in the Pacific Northwest.

Twenty Civil Air Patrol cadets, ages 12 to 18, and 10 adults started at 8 a.m. to prepare the runway for the takeoffs, ridding it of debris and mud.



William Wilson Lewis III / The Press-Enterprise

Lonnie Jeffries, 57, of Corona, pushes his Piper Turbo Arrow before a flight to Chino Airport on Saturday.

Capt. Andrea Binder said, "It wasn't too bad on the east end. As you go closer to where the water came up, it was definitely muddier."

Meta Soko, co-owner of Bob's Airport Cafe, opened her restaurant for the first time since Jan. 11. Business started slowly, she said, but picked up through the day.

*Reach Jerry Soifer at [jsoifer@pe.com](mailto:jsoifer@pe.com) or (951) 893-2112.*

---

Online at: [http://www.pe.com/localnews/corona/stories/PE\\_News\\_Local\\_plane23.a1772.html](http://www.pe.com/localnews/corona/stories/PE_News_Local_plane23.a1772.html)